



TAG WRESTLING

Babies are being electronically tagged in NHS hospitals less than an hour after they are born. A programmed tag is strapped around the baby's tiny ankle so that its exact position in the hospital can be monitored via a central control panel. The reasoning is that electronic tagging will prevent new-born babies from being snatched away and carried off.

A similar argument has already been put forward for children to be tagged, so that we know where they are if truanting or kidnap is suspected. While we're at it, why don't we tag old people? They're always getting lost and wandering around in unsuitable clothing. Come to think of it, that applies to tourists and foreigners too. Let's tag the lot of them.

Zygote hates to be a wet blanket, but the reason these panic measures are completely useless is that a kidnapper is perfectly capable of cutting the tag off their victim, especially if it's a defenceless new-born baby. Sooner or later the authorities will recognise this fact and demand the introduction of the obvious practical alternative. They will call for everyone to be tagged at birth for our own safety, by having a chip injected under the skin near the shoulder, just as we chip cattle. People, cattle, what's the difference?

WAVE GOODBYE

The range of items reviewed in this magazine continues to grow in all directions. In the 1980s, contributors were restricted to writing about computers. But now we tackle all sorts of products that contain a chip, which includes just about everything from a digital camera to a Happy Meal.

Zygote would like to recommend two such items to all his loyal readers,

ZYGOTE

Zygote knows he's not paranoid – they really are after him. But even if the government electronically tags him and stops him from protesting online, he will never agree to use Google's services

as ideal purchases for the late summer season. For just £4,939 you can be the owner of an LG refrigerator with a 13" flat-screen TV built into the door. This device is smart in every sense of the word. It has all the essential elements of a fridge, such as handwriting recognition, weather information, phone number management and an electronic calendar. There's also a roomy ice compartment when you can stick your head when it explodes due to information overload.

Or why not spend your last £115 on an H2O Audio SV, which turns your iPod mini into a personal underwater music system while you frolic beneath the waves. Zygote particularly admires the waterproof headset and silicon earplugs that slide so far up your ear canals you need Raquel Welch to undertake a Fantastic Voyage to get them out again. So why not slip underwater with your iPod going full volume, and say goodbye to underwater tranquillity misery. Keep that party going as you snorkel through the raw sewage by playing something

appropriate by Jim Morrison, Dennis Wilson or Brian Jones.

MINED OUT

Some folk are so upset by the ability of the world's favourite search engine to collect personal data that they have expunged all things Google from their computerised lives. As a public service, Zygote will synthesise Google's data-mining capabilities, and then you can make up your own mind.

If you use the Google toolbar, then every search you make, every web page you view and every link you click is recorded. The Google Web Accelerator corroborates all this data, helping to build up a rounded picture of your habits and activities. Google's Desktop Search exposes the complete content of your desktop, including emails and Word documents.

For business users, Google AdWords requires your credit card information and full address, and if you have agreed to AdWord Conversion Tracking, your online revenue and all the items sold are also known. Google AdSense records complete information about your

website visitors for you. It also reveals the same information to Google.

For private users, a personalised Google Home Page files and records your interests and views, whereas Gmail and Google SMS gives Google access to your email messages, address book and mobile phone data. And of course good old Google cookies can consolidate the whole kit and caboodle into a single dossier all about you. If you're happy about all that, there's nothing to worry about.

DOSSER

In the good old days, DOS was the acronym for Disc Operating System. In the bad new days, DOS stands for Denial Of Service, which is the deliberate and malicious inundation of requests to a network service in order to crash that system. Denial of service attacks were made illegal under the Computer Misuse Act 1990, and that law seems pragmatic and has proved to be workable in practice. So Zygote is very worried about a Parliamentary Bill that is seeking to amend the Act.

It proposes to increase sentences for computer hacking from six months to two years, which may find favour in many quarters, but what worries Zygote is the catch-all wording that would include online lobbying and protest action. Just how many protest emails would constitute a denial of service punishable by two years in chocky? Remember, an illegal gathering in the flesh can consist of as few as two people. This gives government and big business the power to restrict freedom of expression and the exercise of our civil right to protest online. Zygote would love to organise a mass email protest, but he is too afraid in case the amendment has passed into law by the time this is published. ☹

Great Moments in Computing
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212: The Golden Ratio



The Golden Ratio concerns the natural relationship between width and height.



Euclid calculated the Golden Ratio as approximately 1.618, and used it to determine perfectly proportioned sizes..



such as monumental arches and the human form.